



Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Stewardship Council Meeting  
July 12, 2007  
Great Brook Farm, Carlisle, Ma

Meeting Minutes

*Stewardship Councilors in Attendance:* Chairman Dick Cross, Councilors Michael Dutton, Laura Johnson, Henry Lee, John Natoli, and Dan Wolf.

*Public Attendees:* Mike Ryan, Friends of the Fells; Steve Kaiser, Friends of the Fells; A. Richard Miller, Cochituate State Park Advisory Committee; Jill Miller, Natick Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Committee; Carol Gilmour, Friends of Robinson State Park; Kathie Breuninger Friends of Robinson State Park; Claudia Hurley, Friends of Robinson State Park; Heidi Ricci, Mass Audubon; Kate Bowditch, Charles River Watershed Association; Ben Martens, Charles River Conservancy.

*DCR Staff in Attendance:* Commissioner Rick Sullivan, Stephanie Cooper, Jonathan Yeo, Marianne Fleckner, Tom LaRosa, Gary Briere, Anne Fiesinger, Joe Rotundo, Will Natoli, Steve Carlin, and Melissa Martenay.

- I. **Tour of Great Brook Farm (1:40 p.m.)** Melissa Martenay welcomed the group to Great Brook Farm and invited all to join in a tour.
- II. **Call To Order (2:00 p.m.), Councilor Cross**
  - a. Councilor Cross called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for changing the date of the meeting. He noted that among other accomplishments of the past month, DCR staff were to be congratulated on recently completing the Sandisfield acquisition of 900 acres, and Councilor Laura Johnson, on behalf of Mass. Audubon, extended appreciation to DCR's staff for their work on completing this acquisition.
  - b. Councilor Cross reported on a meeting he had with Commissioner Sullivan prior to the meeting. He had noted that the forest and park system is in front of everybody's mind. He stated that he and the Commissioner had had a candid conversation, and that he had shared with him his interpretation of some of the agency history, as well as disappointment about progress on resource management planning (RMP.) Councilor Cross had also raised with Commissioner Sullivan the issue of the inactive positions on the Council, and the need for dedicated staff support for the Council. He also raised with the Commissioner the issue of public responsiveness. He stated that the Commissioner is pragmatic, and will work with the Council in a way they want to work. Councilor Cross then introduced Commissioner Sullivan.
- III. **Commissioner's Report, Rick Sullivan**
  - a. Commissioner Sullivan thanked Councilor Cross and noted that he's been impressed by the dedication of the DCR staff - professionals who come to work with dedication and vision. The Commissioner noted that DCR is an extraordinary department that could be a model across the country on how to operate. He said the agency needs to establish some first-class parks as models out in the field, and continue to build public support for individual parks and for the entire park system. In terms of the latter, he mentioned that he's been struck by the work and enthusiasm of the friends groups that are supporting our parks. He noted that he's glad that the Stewardship Council meetings are rotating among the parks. Each one is unique - from Scusset to the Berkshires - and there are significant numbers of people who want to be supportive.

- b. Commissioner Sullivan noted that the *The Great Parks Pursuit* brought the parks experience across the Commonwealth. He also stated that from talking with the Governor recently last week one-to-one, the Secretary on a weekly basis, and the legislators on Beacon Hill, there is excitement about DCR's mission and a desire to move what we do to the forefront. He noted that in his conversation with Councilor Cross, it was clear this vision is shared by the Council.
- c. The Commissioner mentioned that he and Councilor Cross discussed the Beaches Commission, and that he has spoken with the Commission members. He said that the Commission was borne out of frustration that the constituency that uses the beaches felt not listened to, that the Commission held meetings in each community, bringing in hundreds of people, and got residents vested in the process, bringing results. He said that officials report that there have been changes and improvements at the beaches over the last year, that they are now cleaner, more accessible, and safer, and that the legislators are now receiving complaints that "now there are too many people" at the beaches. Regarding the recent editorial in the *Globe* on Revere Beach, citing the gentleman who complained about construction in the summer months, Commissioner Sullivan noted that it took the reporter three days to find someone who had a negative comment.
- d. Commissioner Sullivan reported that if public support can be built to bring in dollars, that he would fully expect that in next year's budget, we will see increases in DCR's funding. He noted that it will fall to DCR to determine where we will spend those monies, and that a plan and priorities are needed. He mentioned that DCR has a five and one-half person staff working on Resource Management – not enough - but that the agency needs to move forward with the existing resources and develop a plan for spending additional dollars if allocated in the future.
- e. In regard to filling vacancies on the Council, the Commissioner said that we will come back and have discussions about the types of individuals that are needed to round out the Council. He noted that the Council needs dedicated staff time, and that he had made a commitment to Councilor Cross on making that happen and to moving forward with the Council on the agency and Council's shared values.
- f. Commissioner Sullivan noted that recently DCR had marked completion of a \$7.4 million project to re-do the 22-mile Cape Cod Rail Trail, kicked off a \$6 million project to reconstruct the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Pool in Chelsea, and celebrated the opening of a new yurt colony at October Mountain State Forest in the Berkshires. That day he had taken part in an event to announce publicly a project with Community Boating for accessible sailing on the Esplanade, a model for public:private partnership and the leveraging of private funding, that the agency would be using going forward. He reported that the next day he would be joining in a ground-breaking for an \$8.5 million capital improvement project at Horseneck Beach State Reservation, as well as in an event to celebrate the opening of a newly-renovated comfort station at Demarest Lloyd State Park. Commissioner Sullivan congratulated DCR staff, across the system, who he said had done an unbelievably good job on these projects and extended his kudos to all who worked on them.
- g. The Commissioner reported that, budget-wise, the Conference Committee Report on the FY 06 operating budget brought DCR better overall dollars, with the most notable increase in the beaches account, and significant earmarks. He said that he'd asked legislators what we should do with the increased funding for beaches, and they said that we should just keep doing what we're doing. He feels they have a shared vision for the agency.
- h. In closing, he noted that DCR was presenting that day to the Council a letter to go out to a group of representatives of OHV users and law enforcement, environmental, and other interests, to invite them to form an OHV Enforcement Working Group. He emphasized that the letter had not yet gone out, and that if the Council had concerns about it, it wouldn't go out until they were addressed. The letter cited the overlying issue: how we're going to regulate, educate, and provide access across the state for growing demand. He also noted that in speaking with

Representative Wagner, Co-Chair of the Committee on Transportation, he had learned that there will be movement on pending legislation that will address this matter. He stated that DCR wants an enforcement policy in place that will work for all, including users, and that we would like to get this letter out to get the meetings and the process started. Councilor Cross noted, regarding this letter, that DCR had proposed an OHV policy and that the Council's approval required an enforcement plan that would be satisfactory to the Council. Gary Briere noted that DCR plans to hold four meetings between April and October to discuss how enforcement will work and asked for participation by the Council. Commissioner Sullivan thanked Gary Briere for all his hard work in this area and said that the Secretariat recognizes that this is an important policy to move forward. Councilor Lee asked what has changed in the agency position, and Councilor Johnson said that DCR is following up on the Council directive to address the enforcement issue. Gary Briere reported that certain criteria were applied to parks where OHVs are being used, and that application of the "coarse filter" led to closure of Georgetown-Rowley to OHV use this year. He noted that the criteria provide a standard, objective way at evaluating properties for OHV use. Councilor Cross noted that this [letter] relates to a plan for developing an enforcement plan, and Gary Briere stated that bringing the OHV Enforcement Working Group together will give us all the tools and leverage to have effective change. Dan Wolf asked if there would be discussions at the Council level, if the Councilors couldn't make the four meetings. Chairman Cross noted that the plan is for a report on the meetings to be discussed at the Council meetings. Chairman Cross noted that the next Council meeting would be on August 9, and Dan Wolf said that he would like a report at that meeting on the ongoing process, with opportunities for discussion. Commissioner Sullivan asked if there was agreement for having this as an agenda item for the next meeting, and Chairman Cross suggested that it should be a standing agenda item for the next few meetings. Heidi Ricci asked what the role of the group would be on enforcement, and Gary Briere reported that they will have four areas of focus. They will be looking at existing laws and regulations, at the existing enforcement capacity (e.g., EPOs and local police), at the practices that, with zero dollars, can have an impact, and on the educational component – how to engage dealerships and others. Heidi Ricci noted that in talks with local police, the penalty issue had been raised and asked if there would be a representative of the enforcement field on the team. Gary Briere reported that the team would include representatives of DCR's Ranger staff, Massachusetts State Police, DEP, the Mass Conservation Commission, and others. Dan Wolf commented that more people are needed in the field for enforcement and also encouraged that the technology needed to support enforcement be looked at. Chairman Cross confirmed that this will be a standard item on the agenda through November.

#### **IV. Committee Updates and Meeting Schedules**

- a. **Finance Committee**, *Deputy Commissioner Marianne Fleckner for Whitney Hatch*
  - i. Deputy Commissioner Marianne Fleckner provided a report on the conference committee report. She said that the report included \$96.8 million for DCR, a slight increase. It earmarked approximately \$7.1 million, which subtracted from the \$96.8, provides a slight increase in the maintenance budget. As an example of an increase: the increase in the beaches account.
  - ii. Councilor Cross commented that this meant that, net earmarks, the budget for DCR is a little bit better than last year to do the same work. Councilor Wolf noted that prior to reorganization, the combined funding for DEM and MDC was \$103 million. He said that better tools need to be in place, such as gap analysis, and that without them, where individual funds go may be too politically driven. Councilor Dutton noted that the administrative account did not include the resource management planning dollars.

- iii. Dick Miller asked whether this means the agency has less maneuverability on the budget now. Commissioner Sullivan replied that if you pull out the earmarks, there was about a \$1.35 million increase. We would have preferred additional funding for resource management planning.
  - iv. Councilor Natoli asked when work would begin on the FY 09 budget, and Deputy Commissioner Fleckner said that per A&F direction, this fall. Councilor Cross noted that the Beaches Commission had rounded up \$5 million, and said that we need to get a champion behind what we want funded. Councilor Lee commented that in real terms, the agency is down about 1% during a period of significant economic growth in the Commonwealth and that he hopes this is reversed. Deputy Commissioner Fleckner said that we are looking forward to increases in the proper accounts to support our mission. Councilor Lee noted that this will be difficult to achieve, due to health care costs. Councilor Cross said that resource management planning provides a vehicle for prioritizing so that we can do few things extraordinarily well, rather than spread dollars across lots of things.
- b. Resource Management Planning Committee, *Henry Lee***
- i. Councilor Lee noted that this program has been given less resources than it was assumed two years ago and has five and one-half plus staff going forward. He recommended that two regions be picked – where DCR has planners in place, the Central and the South – and begin the RMP process in those regions, as a pilot project, noting that it could take two years or more to complete. He further recommended that guidelines be drafted and presented at the October meeting. He also suggested that discussion take place about using some funds for overall studies, for example to assemble visitor information, and noted that college students and interns could assist in data collection. He also said the improved GIS data and information on parks is also needed.
  - ii. Councilor Lee reported that Leslie Luchonok will be meeting with the Sub-Committee and providing them with a fleshed-out plan and guidelines, as well as a plan for some overall studies and improving GIS data and information on parks.
- c. Policy Committee Report, *Laura Johnson***
- i. Councilor Johnson reported that the policy committee had met earlier that week. She said that they had discussed the public outreach and notification for forest cutting plans policy, as well as the hierarchy of planning efforts by DCR. They are interested in knowing how the different plans fit together and when public comment takes place. She noted that a narrative was prepared by DCR staff about the planning processes, outcomes, status, resources, and timeliness, which needs to be shown graphically. She suggested that the website be used to greater advantage to help the public understand DCR, for example, that a posting of organization charts would be helpful. In terms of the public outreach and notification for forest cutting plans policy, Councilor Johnson reported that the Committee reviewed the public input and proposed revisions, and that the Stewardship Council has copies of all comments on additional revisions. She said that the Committee would be meeting again on this issue and noted that at the Council's August meeting she anticipated that the revised forest-cutting policy would be proposed for a vote.

## **V. Approval of Minutes from Meeting of May 6, 2007**

All were in favor of the minutes from May 7, 2007. Councilor Cross inquired about the availability of minutes from the executive session on land acquisition. Stephanie Cooper reported that they were being prepared and would be circulated.

## **VI. Other Issues**

- a. Councilor Natoli raised the issue of climate change, asking how DCR was monitoring the impact on its mission and taking action. Acting Deputy Commissioner Jonathan Yeo replied that DCR is incorporating these considerations into various planning efforts, including resource management planning. Councilor Natoli asked if there is a central, umbrella policy on climate change, and Dan Wolf suggested that DCR look at green building practices and energy use in the parks. Councilor Lee said that the state energy office has made progress with the audit component, and that DCR could link its buildings to it. Heidi Ricci said that climate change should be considered in regard to infrastructure – roads and culverts – in light of more intense storms. Councilor Cross asked if the Council had a specific proposal on this matter, and Councilor Natoli said just a general interest in the agency’s efforts in this area. Commissioner Sullivan reported that he had just attended a lengthy briefing on stormwater management and its impact on flooding, and that shoreline monitoring was taking place at Waquoit Bay. Councilor Natoli asked whether there are models that DCR can use in this area, and the Commissioner indicated that the agency can join the effort being led at the Secretariat level. Henry Lee noted that regional studies have been prepared by a Harvard professor. Councilor Johnson said that Mass Audubon had faced this issue too, in their land acquisition program. Councilor Cross said that this issue would be on the Council’s agenda for the next meeting. Councilor Natoli said that he would bring in information on other studies, e.g., done by the State of California.
- b. Councilor Lee raised his the issue of the relationship between the Department and the public and the Department and the Legislature, stating that some relationships have come apart and noting that concerns have been raised by some individuals about their interaction with DCR. He asked how a plan can be developed to improve interaction with the public and with representatives. Councilor Cross noted that we need to push this ideal forward. Commissioner Sullivan said that he’s spent a fair amount of time on the Hill, including close to a dozen legislators, and that the Secretary has directed that DCR have a larger presence legislatively. He reported that he’d received a positive response from Beaches Commission members when he suggested having the DCR Commissioner go back out into a public forum to get feedback from the public on how the agency is doing in this area. He noted that DCR needs to increase transparency and go out on a regular basis, similar to what was done with the Governor’s Transition Teams. He stated that the only way the agency would be able to increase support would be through outreach and building a constituency. Councilor Lee emphasized the need for public input, for improved relations with the Legislature, and for public complaints to be well-handled, consistently. In terms of the latter, Councilor Natoli asked if there was problem in people not knowing who to contact. Stephanie Cooper replied that there is a Community Relations phone number, as well as a system in place for tracking complaints. Councilor Lee said that a consumer culture is needed within the agency, and Councilor Cross agreed that that is a hugely important point. Dan Wolf stated that the Council’s geographic representation is not being leveraged and raised the issue of how it can be utilized.

## **VII. Public Comment:**

- a. **Mike Ryan** of the Friends of the Fells stated that he feels a turnaround at this session from the previous goal of delivering extraordinary park experiences with the resources that the agency has. He said that in meetings with legislators, the Friends hear that that the Middlesex Fells is well-loved, but the property is underfunded, with a consequent lack of personnel and ability to enforce regulations. He asked how the rangers can be supported. Commissioner Sullivan replied that Chief Ranger Curt Rudge is moving toward getting legal authority for rangers to issue civil citations, something that needs to be looked at. He noted that it would be good to have a way to collect tickets after they’re issued and to tie them to renewals of licenses. Mike Ryan invited the Commissioner to visit the Middlesex Fells.

- b. **Steve Kaiser** of the Friends of the Fells said to the Commissioner that he was glad to hear of his appointment and that he feels he is very practical and down-to-earth. He raised the issue of the parkways transfer, saying that he sees the curb-to-curb transfer of parkways as impractical. He said they are not public ways, they are roadways over parks, and cited problems with the Jamaica way. The Commissioner noted that before a transfer of curb-to-curb responsibilities occurs, he understands that ensuring the preservation of their historic nature is critical and that he has heard this view expressed by DCR personnel. He said that there will be an opportunity for public discussion for what elements would be included in a transfer to MHD. He commented that DCR has seen significant movement on the transfer of 31 bridges most in need of major repair. He noted that it probably does make sense to move bridges that are not pedestrian or parkway overpasses, and that parkways are a more complex issue requiring further analysis.
- c. **Dick Miller** of the Cochituate State Park Advisory Committee noted that he has three anniversaries to celebrate: his 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of working in the park system, the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Cochituate State Park, and the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary for Boston's first public water supply, Lake Cochituate. Dick welcomed the Commissioner, noting that he worked with him on the Massachusetts Turnpike Advisory Board, on property disposal issues. Dick said he had a photo of Lake Cochituate that he would share with the Council next month and raised some key issues of concern to the Advisory Committee. He noted that a developer is planning to add two significant high-rise buildings on property near the Lake. He said that he wants the state park to stand up to the Town of Natick regarding the siting of the new developments on the scenic shoreline and asked that a DCR planner be involved in the matter to put all the pieces together. He also cited a proposal for the transfer of MassTurnpike property to be used as a railtrail, which the Turnpike Authority has not supported, and suggested that DCR has an opportunity to be a link between the parties. He pointed out that CSX is offering \$2 million toward acquisition of the railtrail, which has a \$14+ million appraisal. Dick also asked for funding for rapid response, e.g., response to the milfoil problem at Lake Cochituate, and cited the need for effective partnering and to empower the public and environmental groups.
- d. **Claudia Hurley** of the Friends of Robinson State Park thanked the Council for their courteous reception at the last meeting and provided additional information. She said that since the last meeting, the Friends had put on a bio-blitz, but that DCR had made it difficult for them to do it. She said that the permitting process was difficult, but that the Friends did it and brought in respectable scientists to a community event. She noted that it cost the Friends \$400 to put on the bio-blitz, and that the group plans to hold another one. She said the Friends support the concept of reaching out in a more welcoming way. Deputy Commissioner Yeo stated that he was involved in this matter and that DCR did everything to make sure that the event was permitted and responded to every request. Claudia replied that the Friends had never had the experience of asking for a permit for anything like this, that the bio-blitz was proposed in December and permit requested in January. Commissioner Sullivan noted that senior staff had been involved in resolving permit issues, that the bio-blitz received some publicity that was very positive and that the event was well received by the public.
- e. **Heidi Ricci** of the Forests and Parks Partnership (FPP) noted that the organization had been formed in 2001 and included Mass. Audubon, the Appalachian Mountain Club, ELM, Environment Mass., the Massachusetts Sierra Club. She said that the FPP had supported the merger, issued a paper on Parks in Crisis, become involved with the Conservation and Recreation Campaign, and worked on the Partners-in-Parks Conference. The FPP feels that the park system has finally reached a crucial phase where there's public recognition that the parks matter and are important to the quality of life and the economy. She said they are very hopeful that DCR can get to the next level in the next budget cycle. She presented a letter from the FPP and a transition paper to the Commissioner and

requested a meeting with him. She noted that the FPP Steering Committee is to identify key issues and priorities, and once those are in draft form and prior to publication, they would like to share them with the Commissioner, Stewardship Council, and DCR staff.

Melissa Marteney read a poem for the Commissioner and welcomed him to Great Brook Farm State Park.

A document regarding blue-green algae that had been submitted by Kate Bowditch on behalf of the Charles River Watershed Association was distributed to the Council members.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:40 p.m.